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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to offer some possibilities for comprehensive change in the way principals are trained that will be customized for each individual institution of higher education. The traditional state-controlled, university-based, licensure-driven models of administration and principal preparation specifically are changing for the following reasons: (1) recruiting individuals representing a natural talent for administration is better than choosing school leaders from present self-selection practices; (2) coursework in educational administration has been regarded as lacking in rigor; (3) theory and application in educational administration have been traditionally fragmented; and, finally, (4) only 20 percent of all major administrator training institutions list prior district-level experience as a desired component for employment. The following solutions to these problems are suggested and have already been implemented at Butler University's Experiential Program for Preparing School Principals : (1) Carefully screen a specified number of self-selected would-be administrators; (2) increase rigor by requiring more research-based knowledge in the field of educational leadership; (3) solidify theory and practice via field-based internships that assimilate administrative course content with the actual practice of school leadership; and (4) employ practitioners who not only have administrative experience but have proven research records. Appendices A and B list proficiencies required for completion of the program and describe the operational roles for the university, the graduate student, and the practitioner/mentor. (JAM)

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THE REDESIGN OF PRINCIPALSHIP PREPARATION PROGRAMS: RHETORIC OR SUBSTANTIVE REFORM

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THE REDESIGN OF PRINCIPALSHIP PREPARATION PROGRAMS: RHETORIC OR SUBSTANTIVE REFORM

The process of change, as it relates to the field of education, is as inevitable as the breaking of dawn and the corresponding arrival of nightfall. As Larry Cuban (1990) so cogently states:

> ... when an impulse for reform rises, crests in the larger society, and then spills over [into] schools, conflicting values buried deep within schools also receive attention. The political process already existing in a decentralized system of schooling produce interest groups and individuals perennially pressing schools to alter what they do. The values of these groups receive renewed attention for a time until public interest fades (p. 9).

Although Professor Cuban certainly posits a rational view of the omnipresent evolution of change, many would argue that the calls for reform in educational administration have never been as imperative as they are today. Not since the unified search for theoretical parameters that surround the practice of school leadership (circa 1955) has there been such an outpouring of concern for modifications in the daily practice of school administration. Even a cursory glance at the major journals in the field provides the reader with a plethora of reform material to preview. Included in this data are topics such as teacher empowerment, decentralized administration, site-based management, effective schools correlates, and, of course, comprehensive school restructuring.

In a quest to keep pace with these multifaceted educational changes, the conventional processes and procedures employed for the preparation of school administrators have also been under tremendous attack. The traditional state-controlled, university-based, licensure-driven models of administration are currently being analyzed with the greatest of scrutiny -- the calls are clear, change is now becoming a reality. Cooper and Boyd (1987) have been so bold as to state that the majority of principalship training programs in this country offer little concentration toward the intermeshing of theory with practice in an attempt to provide a holistic view of leadership in the educational arena. However, the question that possibly raises the most disconcerting response from all those who labor in the field of education leadership comes from Finn and Peterson (1985):

> Is there a valid relationship between what individuals do in universities in order to become licensed as educational administrators and the actual knowledge, skills, and competencies that they need to be effective unit managers and system leaders in the public schools? (p. 42).

To categorically accept an affirmative or negating stance in respect to this query would indeed be simplistic. Nonetheless, the mere acceptance of either response would, likewise, be myopic. To formulate an intelligent response, a student of school administration must examine the various aspects of traditional administrator training and then determine the validity of these practices. One might choose to initiate such an investigation at the very beginning -- with an

examination of the selection processes employed by universities to garner new graduate students for school administration programs. Aspiring school principals are, at present, often admitted to graduate programs merely on the basis of self-selection. If these men and women are capable of meeting the most rudimentary entrance requirements, they are instantly enrolled in courses leading toward principalship certification. Unlike physicians, dentists, and attorneys, a vast majority of education graduate students applying for admittance are granted such admittance. Rather than assuming an approach that is both selective and elite in nature, many educational administration programs merely accept the "bottom of the barrel" (Cooper & Boyd, 1987). It appears that little, if any, time is spent attempting to discern what capabilities an individual should hold in order to lead a school community. As the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989) has clearly stated: "Vigorous recruitment strategies [must] be mounted to attract the brightest and most capable candidates ..." (p. 5). Unlike present self-selection practices, it would appear that principalship training programs could be better served by the active recruitment of individuals possessing a natural talent for school administration. Such recruitment might include the canvassing of area school districts for recommendations of individuals who possess both the aptitude and intelligence for success as a school administrator (Shibles, 1988).

In conjunction with this current state of lackadaisical admissions, coursework in the field of educational administration has been regarded as lacking in rigor and continuity as well (Coleman & Achilles, 1987; Shibles, 1988). Here, the divorce of theory and

practice is consistently mentioned as area of problematic concern. However, potentially more scathing cries are voiced by students who claim that entire courses are devoid of meaningful content. The outgrowth of this dissatisfaction is expressed in caustic statements that categorize graduate education classes as "Mickey Mouse" and "Ticket Punching" (Smith, 1989a). These claims are certainly exacerbated when the actual sequencing of administrative courses is overlooked or openly declared as unimportant. Students must be given a feel for sequential progression along a preplanned continuum, if administrative programs are to be considered relevant and meaningful. As Miles Bryant (1989) states in respect to the issue of appropriate course content and sequencing:

> The menu of courses has changed over the years ... but coursework in educational administration has remained the same, virtually resembling the preparation programs formed in the earlier part of the century. The core coursework ... continues to reflect the strong influence of those who initially gave to educational administration the role of supervision, management, and accountability -- what Callahan labels as the cult of efficiency (p. 55).

The fragmentation of theoretical and practical knowledge relating to school leadership has been solidified principally through the use of a field-based internship, most commonly offered as a one semester course. This course ostensibly is to be taken at the conclusion of the graduate student's thirty-six to forty-five hour administrative training package. Much like the unidimensional student teaching experiences of the 1960's, students concluding their coursework are finally given the opportunity to see if the actual practice of the craft is as intriguing as the investigation of its various

tenets. Prior to the emergence of Danforth Programs and similar experiential learning opportunities, few preservice principals where given the opportunity to systematically practice the craft of school administration in tandem with the acquisition of appropriate content. Without the opportunity to unite theory with practice (often referred to as the gaining of praxis), academic preparation appears to be little more than the amassing of pedantic rhetoric in respect to a given area of scholarly pursuit (Smith, 1989b). Daresh (1988) powerfully states the case for integration of academics and field-based experience as applied to principalship preparation:

> From various sources ... comes a clear and consistent call for university administrator preparation programs to stop teaching about administration and, instead, direct attention toward helping people to learn how to administer schools. The suggestion in most ... proposals is for intense and meaningful internships, planned field experiences, and other forms of practica to be incorporated with increasing frequency in preparation programs (p. 17).

A final area of critique that must be discussed is that of faculty composition in departments of educational administration. Without question, the representation of the faculty in any university department largely determines the overall quality of that program. Faculty members working with preservice principals, therefore, must display a significant grounding of experience in the field of educational leadership and should be well versed in the teaching/learning process as well (Shibles, 1988). The modern program faculty must reflect both balance and diversity. Discoveries made by Black and English (1986) indicate that only 20% of all major administrator training institutions list prior district-level experience as a desired component

for employment; the profession can no longer exist devoid of such practical experience. It has been vehemently argued by some that the pendulum has swung too far away from experience and now rests solely in the area of discipline-based expertise (McCarthy, Kuh, Newell, and Iacona, 1988). Contentions of this nature must be examined, thus allowing for corresponding transfigurations to subsequently be implemented.

As these transfigurations begin to take place, the practitioner and the researcher will, by necessity, work side by side to develop a plethora of new agendas for significant study. Traditional quantitative research will be bolstered by qualitative studies that focus on genuine school improvement and programmatic redesign. To merely accept the notion that there is little relationship between university preparation and the actual practice of school administration is indeed irresponsible. The goal of the professoriate must be to bring about meaningful change that allows theory and practice to unite in a fashion this is both intellectually inspiring and professionally empowering (Smith, 1989a).

An Experiential Model For Programmatic Redesign

As a resultant outcome from the examination of both proactive and reactive thought regarding the aforementioned concerns, Butler University founded a neoteric program in 1982 that based administrative study on experiential learning. Unlike traditional graduate programs of the time, students were encouraged to develop a solid knowledge base in respect to administration but were also given

opportunities to acquire new skills through active experiences within the profession. The Experiential Program for Preparing School Principals (EPPSP) was one of the first graduate training programs in the country to operate an andragogical learning center devoted totally to the study of school administration. As a center for adult learning, students in cohort groups were encouraged to work on collaborate projects, learn through self-direction, capitalize on prior experience, and engage actively in critical and reflective thinking processes (Lotven & Smith, 1990). Using a professional model much like that employed for staff development, students were challenged to take the knowledge gained for various seminar sessions and begin to apply these learned experiences to actual K-12 educational settings.

To mitigate the concerns regarding self-selection into school administration programs, the EPPSP faculty have designed screening processes that result in the careful selection of a specified number of cohort group members. In September of each school year, announcements for the impending selection of new group members are mailed to all school corporations in Central Indiana. Superintendents and principals are encouraged to nominate individuals who they feel have the potential to become true educational leaders. Upon receiving these nominations, individual packets are sent to each perspective candidate. These packets include standard graduate information, data sheets explaining the experiential program, and a detailed application form. Those individuals who wish to be considered for candidacy into the program complete a battery of appropriate tests and a personal interview with the program faculty. After all the information has been assimilated and codified,

approximately twenty cohort members are selected for admission. The basis for selection is grounded in criteria such as prior experience, academic background, professional recommendations, degree status, and quality of written and spoken expression. Typically, one in every three applicants is selected for admission into this rigorous two year program.

During the thirty-six semester hours that students work with the EPPSP faculty, great detail is given to both the practical and the research-based knowledge required for success in the field of educational leadership. Topics discussed in semi-weekly seminars include: staff and student personnel, school and community relations, organizational behavior, leadership theory, instructional supervision, curriculum development, scheduling and budgeting, school law, and school plant management.

Through the use of an experiential model, however, students are no longer merely expected to study about curricular issues, about financial practices, or about the management of school facilities. These students are required to continuously assimilate administrative content with the actual practice of school leadership. To accomplish this task, fifty-two proficiencies have been developed with the expressed purpose of providing opportunities for comprehensive student growth (See Appendix A) . These proficiencies are given to students upon entering the program, with completion required prior to certification. By combining traditional classroom presentations with the experiential component of proficiency attainment, EPPSP has long been able to meet the following recommendation made by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration:

> ... curriculum should be practice-based and practice-driven -- both directly and through the application of theoretical frameworks to school operations and functions. Rather than segregating theory and practice, the curriculum should integrate them. Instruction must be dynamic and of uniformly high quality; faculty must recognize the instructional needs of adults and show sensitivity to the racial and gender diversity of students. The curriculum should transmit the common core in a logical, sequential progression (p. 21).

Mentoring and structured shadowing experiences are carefully developed in order to further support the contentions of congruity between theory and practice. Outstanding principals and other recognized leaders in the field of education are called upon consistently to serve as exemplars for the aspiring elementary and secondary school administrators. As the graduate students interact with these mentors, the opportunity to model appropriate professional behavior and to reflect upon inappropriate action is continuously afforded.

As an extension of this opportunity for introspection, specific seminar sessions are devoted to what Schon (1987) has termed as "professional reflection." Through the use of reflective journal writing, students are forced to focus on the dichotomy that exists between theory and practice. Discussions relating to such journal entries, and the accompanying cognitive dissonance that arises, are often the most powerful aspects of any given seminar session. The outcome of many such sessions can be defined as the bridging between "... the lived realities of present-day schools and the ... 'mindscapes' of what schools must be" (Dantley & Quantz, 1989). The truly successful administrative practitioner is one who is capable of using research to empower others toward a predefined vision of excellence. The

reflective seminars allow preservice administrators the opportunity to begin formulating the processes and procedures needed in order for such action to become reified.

Educating the reflective practitioner requires a great deal of time and effort on the part of any program faculty. Because the EPPSP faculty is diminutive in nature, the two members who serve the program are consistently asked to adorn a number of "differing hats." This constant juxtaposition of professional duties can be both positive and negative in nature. As the faculty prepares to teach various content seminars, make school visitations, establish mentor networks, and oversee proficiency development, the pragmatic aspect of limited time begins to surface. In an attempt to alleviate such restrictions, clinical faculty are frequently employed to serve as guest presenters. These individuals are practitioners with specific strengths in diverse areas of curricular concern. The employment of these practitioners allows the graduate students an opportunity to hear "real world" solutions to particular problems, as well as to interact with recognized leaders in the field. The use of clinical professors also allows the university an opportunity to strengthen content areas that are not presently dominant research interests of the faculty. Like the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Butler University indeed feels that "practicing educational leaders [must] have a greater role in performing instruction" (Shibles, 1988, p. 14). The deployment of these clinical professors is a demonstrated example of such commitment.

Again, unlike traditional educational administration training programs, the distribution of a final examination does not signify the

conclusion of a given academic term. As the semester comes to a close for EPPSP, the graduate students and faculty members meet individually to discuss the many accomplishments that have transpired during the preceding academic term. These discussion sessions or exit interviews have become a significant part of the overall learning and growth process. It is here that each student has the opportunity to celebrate success, as well as analyze failure. Of even greater consequence is the final exit interview held during the last phase of the program. Prior to this session, students copiously compile data relating to the many studies and projects that have been conducted during their two years of graduate study. As these portfolios are reviewed, the faculty members are perpetually amazed by the thorough and holistic nature of such documentation. These portfolios contain a cornucopia of administrative experiences. Along with the documentation for each of the fifty-two proficiencies, students often describe involvement in major district-wide projects including: the development of computer networks, authorship of a comprehensive substitute handbook, the redesign of teacher evaluation packages, involvement with numerous staff development projects, and rewriting of comprehensive curriculum guides.

The operational procedures for an experiential program are quite unlike those found in a traditional principalship training program (See Appendix B); the implementation of these changes can be difficult and glacier-like in movement. Curriculum committees at major universities are often quite bureaucratic and unaccustomed to risk taking. However, if the educational professorate is indeed interested in heeding the comments of its critics, such changes

appear inevitable. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989) made this statement most succinctly when it said:

> We understand that our proposal will necessitate changes in current administration preparation programs that will not always be easy... As we see it, the nation's first duty is to its students, who deserve well-trained [educational] administrators (p. 25).

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this work is not to set forth a rigid template for other universities to follow in respect to the training of educational administrators. Rather, the topic of reform has been discussed with the expressed intent of providing possibilities for comprehensive change that will be customized for each individual institution of higher education. The traditional "smorgasbord approach" to the preparation of school administrators has come under tremendous attack. Many in the field, including this author, accept these criticisms as valid. The acceptance of such validity, in turn, has inspired a series of programmatic changes. The Experiential Program for Preparing School Principals does not stand alone in the effort to reform educational administration preparation programs. It does, however, stand as one of the pioneers in this movement.

Modifications made to administrator training programs must reflect a sincere analysis of the problems surrounding current options for certification. To merely accept the adaptations made at Butler University would, at best, be questionable. The professorate at all universities offering administrator training must move beyond the

rhetoric of reform and begin the process of introspective questioning. Should these programs not be in accord with the present world of school leadership, adjustments must be made. As these adjustments are initiated, the nontraditional administration programs will certainly offer fertile ground for further inquiry.

Existing programs offering rigorous selection processes, challenging academic curricula, comprehensive field-based experiences, and responsive faculty will serve as the exemplars for others to emulate. Such emulation will, in turn, lead to a sharing of ideas, concepts, and methodologies best suited for the preparation of future school leaders. With the support of esteemed colleagues like John Hoyle (1982), it is the genuine hope of the EPPSP faculty and student body that all educational administration programs will eventually embrace this concluding remark:

> Campus based and field based clinical experiences are essential elements of preparing educational leaders. Clinical arrangements should provide opportunities for students to compare their experiences with the knowledge base, to diagnose sources of difficulties and identify problems, to develop plans and strategies suggested by their knowledge, and to assess outcomes. Opportunities should be provided for systematic observation and participation in several field settings under the joint supervision of faculty and experienced practitioners (p. 13).

Appendix A

Proficiencies Required for Completion of the Experiential Program for Preparing School Principals

Proficiency #1: Conduct A Needs Assessment

Proficiency #2: Resolve Conflict With An Irate Patron

Proficiency #3: Deliver An Oral/Visual Presentation To A Diverse Group That Might Include: School Board Members, Parents, Students, Professional Staff Members, And/Or Community Leaders

Proficiency #4: Submit An Article For Publication

Proficiency #5: Develop Effective Written Communication Skills As Applied Directly To The Needs Of An Educational Leader

Proficiency #6: Facilitate A Diverse Group (Parent, Community, Staff, and Students) To Consensus On The Resolution Of A Sensitive Issue Such As A School Closing, School Reorganization, Or Comprehensive School Improvement Project

Proficiency #7: Actively Participate In An Effort To Improve Cultural Understanding And Human Relations Within An Academic Setting

Proficiency #8: Actively Participate In A Significant Fashion To Enhance Cultural Understanding Within The Community

Proficiency #9: Participate In A Student Teacher/Mentor Teacher Program

Proficiency #10: Design, Develop, and Implement A Staff Development Program

Proficiency #11: Develop A Partnership With The Community Using Various Resources To Enhance The Educational Atmosphere

Proficiency #12: Design, Implement, And Evaluate A Curricular Program; Influence Decision-Making Based On The Data Obtained From These Ventures

Proficiency #13: Participate In A Textbook Adoption Process

Proficiency #14: Conduct A Follow-Up Study Of Graduates From A Specific Educational Institution In Order To Determine Programmatic Effectiveness

Proficiency #15: Develop A Forecast Of The Future Based On A Sound Philosophical Or Empirical Base And Inspire Others To Articulate Long-Term Planning Based On That Vision

Proficiency #16: Devise A Creative Use For The Computer Resulting In Increased Efficiency and Effectiveness For Administrative or Instructional Application

Proficiency #17: Participate In The Development Of A Diagnostic-Prescriptive Plan To Assist A Student With Psychological Or Emotional Needs

Proficiency #18: Develop Or Expand Curricular Programs For Special Needs Students

Proficiency #19: Assist In The Design And Operation Of A Comprehensive Program Budget

Proficiency #20: Explore Sources, Structures, and Ramifications Of District-Wide Funding

Proficiency #21: Write A Grant Proposal For External Funding

Proficiency #22: Develop And Implement A Plan To Expand The Role Of Parents And The Home As An Educating Institution

Proficiency #23: Enhance Professional Growth Through Reading Of Relevant And Current Educational Literature

Proficiency #24: Intervene In A Building So That The Overall Climate Is Improved

Proficiency #25: Interact With Students On Discipline Or Management Problems

Proficiency #26: Take An Original Idea And Convert It To An Appropriate Set of Practices. Secure Permission To Implement These Practices And Then Evaluate The Outcome Of The Overall Venture

Proficiency #27: Assume A Leadership Role In Planning To Improve Student Activities Or Extracurricular Activities

Proficiency #28: Develop/Participate In An In-Service Program Dealing With Health-Related Emergency Procedures

Proficiency #29: Design And Implement A Plan To Manage Substitute Teachers

Proficiency #30: Participate In Professional Contract Negotiations

Proficiency #31: Participate In A Legal Conflict Involving Staff And/Or Students

Proficiency #32: Participate In A Student Due Process Hearing

Proficiency #33: Participate In A Special Education Case Study

Proficiency #34: Participate With The Judicial System And Community Agencies In The Resolution Of A Juvenile Court Case

Proficiency #35: Assist In The Design And Implementation Of A Comprehensive Building Schedule

Proficiency #36: Construct Or Modify An Organizational Policy, Rule, Or Regulation

Proficiency #37: Lead An Attempt At Participatory Decision-Making By Using The Theory Z Model

Proficiency #38: Participate In A North Central Accreditation Visitation Or An External Climate Audit

Proficiency #39: Participate In The Resolution of A Volatile Social Issue Involving Home, Community, And School

Proficiency #40: Participate In The Workings Of A Board Meeting

Proficiency #41: Participate In A Variety Of Cultural And Educational Extension Activities

Proficiency #42: Participate In The Termination Process Of A Staff Member

Proficiency #43: Resolve A Conflict With Members Of The Noncertified Staff

Proficiency #44: Participate In A Selection Process Leading To The Employment Of A New Faculty Member

Proficiency #45: Influence A Colleague To Improve Professionally

Proficiency #46: Design, Research, And Attempt To Implement A Program To Provide Incentives For Professional Excellence

Proficiency #47: Complete A Supervision Cycle With A Colleague Or Subordinate

Proficiency #48: Develop A Staff Evaluation Plan

Proficiency #49: Design A Staff Development Plan For Noncertified Employees

Proficiency #50: Participate In The Orientation Of New Staff Members

Proficiency #51: Design, Develop, And Implement A Plan To Improve Student Attendance

Proficiency #52: Organize And Administer A Testing Program

Appendix B

A Description of Operational Roles for the University, the Graduate Student, and the Practitioner/Mentor As Applied to the Experiential Program for Preparing School Principals

The Role of the University

1. To provide the aspiring principal with an intellectual environment suited to the advanced study necessary in becoming a competent and capable school administrator.

2. To provide a library with holdings commensurate to the needs of an advanced graduate student in the field of educational leadership.

3. To employ a critical mass of faculty that have both practical and scholarly credentials relating specifically to the area of building-level administration.

4. To employ equally talented practitioners (on an adjunct basis) who can provide insight into the daily tribulations and exaltations of the elementary and/or secondary principalship.

5. To understand and embrace the various dimensions that surround experiential learning.

6. To provide learning opportunities and grading procedures based on the theory of andragogy and not that of pedagogy.

7. To assist mentors with the difficult task of carefully leading the neophyte administrator into the actual field of educational leadership.

8. To provide support for the graduate student as he/she becomes a part of a specific action project that may not always succeed.

9. To provide a climate that allows for reflective seminars to celebrate success and to accept failure as a part of the learning process.

10. To accept into the program only those talented individuals who demonstrate a clear commitment and understanding for the demands and rigors of the principalship.

The Role of the Graduate Student

1. To be a willing and active participant in the learning process.

2. To attend all learning sessions with the notion that to succeed in administration one must be well prepared and willing to contribute.

3. To design and implement field-based projects that benefit the school system, as well as the graduate student.

4. To work in tandem with a capable mentor -- always looking beyond "what is" and imagining "what could be."

5. To be an amenable member of the cohort group; striving for group success at all times.

6. To be constantly immersed in the reading of research and other scholarly work relating specifically to the field of educational leadership.

7. To consistently search for learning opportunities that will solidify a foundation for excellence in educational leadership.

8. To produce research, field studies, and other documentation that will assist professionals in becoming more adept at building level administration.

9. To construct a professional portfolio that clearly describes the depth and breadth of the graduate training program from which the individual has successfully departed.

The Role Of The Practitioner/Mentor

1. To assist the aspiring principal in all phases of professional development.

2. To demonstrate excellence in respect to the overall position of elementary or secondary principal.

3. To display and cultivate an ethical demeanor that permeates throughout all aspects of administrative action.

4. To allow the neophyte to fail and accept this failure as an integral aspect of the experiential learning process.

5. To allow the graduate student to critically critique current practices of administration and offer constructive feedback in respect to these critiques.

6. To demonstrate the vast array of human relations skills necessary for success as a building principal.

7. To model strategies of administration, including: participatory management, long-range planning, instructional leadership, goal setting, and visionary decision making.

8. To continually provide a realistic description of the profession of school administration and to evaluate the neophyte in respect to this established criterion.

9. To demonstrate a willingness to grow personally and professionally by attending seminars, workshops, and conferences with the aspiring principal.

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